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VERSES FROM MAORILAND

DORA WILCOX





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VERSES FROM MAORILAND

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BY

DORA WILCOX

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN

156, CHARING CROSS ROAD

1905

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Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press

PR

6045

W 6354 v

TO

MY MOTHER

960695

NEARLY all these Verses have already appeared in the *Sydney Bulletin*, the *Australasian*, the *Christchurch Weekly Press*, or the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine*. My thanks are due to the Editors of these periodicals for permission to reprint.

DORA WILCOX.

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Verses from Maoriland

ON AWE

PEACEFUL it is: the long light glows and
glistens

On English grass;

Sweet are the sounds upon the ear that listens;—

The winds that pass

Rustle the tussock, and the birds are calling,

The sea below

Murmurs, upon its beaches rising, falling,

Soft, soft, and slow.—

All undisturbed the Pakeha's herds are creeping

Along the hill;

On lazy tides the Pakeha's sails are sleeping,

And all is still.

Here once the mighty Atua had his dwelling
 In mystery,
And hence weird sounds were heard at midnight,
 swelling
 Across the sea.

Here once the Haka sounded ; and din of battle
 Shook the grey crags,
Triumphant shout, and agonized death-rattle
 Startled the shags.

And now such peace upon this isthmus narrow,
 With Maori blood
Once red !—these heaps of stones,—a greenstone
 arrow
 Rough-hewn and rude !

Gone is the Atua, and the hillsides lonely,
 The warriors dead ;
No sight, no sound ! the weird wild wailing
 only
 Of gull instead.

Come not the Rangatira hither roaming
As once of yore,
To dance a ghostly Haka in the gloaming,
And feast once more ?

Tena koe Pakeha ! within this fortification
Grows English grass—
Tena koe ! subtle conqueror of a nation
Doomed, doomed to pass !

LOVE

FROM out the wonder-country
 He rides, whose name is Love,
And recks not whether sunlight glows,
 Or shy stars show above !
From out the wonder-country
 He travels far and fast,
And joy there is in hut, or hall,
 When Love comes home at last.

His reins are Pride and Prudence,
 His spur it is Desire ;
His horse's hoofs are shod with Hope
 Well-wrought in Passion's fire.
No matter what the colour be,
 Or white, or black, or roan,
There's not a steed Love will not mount,
 For he is Lord alone !

There is no lock can stay him,
He laughs at bolt and bar ;
The winds are but his messengers,
The waves his servants are.
He climbs the white Sierra,
He clears the convent wall,
He clatters up the palace steps,
For Love is Lord of all.

Alas, alas ! the many
Who linger,—even as I !—
Who wait, and watch, the livelong night,
And hear him hurry by !
And drear is life for ever,
And sad the looking back,
For come what may, by dark, or day,
Love turns not on his track.

Ah, Love ! from out the distance
I hear the ring of hoofs,
Now loud,—now low,—now fast,—now
slow,
But sure towards our roofs !

And comes he here to tarry ?
Or will he gallop past ?
O royal Love, O Master,
Come home to me at last !

THE LAST OF THE FOREST

HAST thou not heard, O White Man, through a
troubled dreaming

On some still night when all the world lay
stark,

Sharp through the silence, moaning of the sea,
and screaming

Of night-birds in the dark ?

Hast thou not said, O White Man, shivering
when the shrieking

Wild voices thrilled thee in a mystery of
pain :

"Peace! 'tis the Ocean calling! 'tis the Dead
Tree creaking !

Hush thee, my heart, again !"

Are they but birds ? is it the sea in lamentation,
Or is it Ghosts of Earth, and Air, that cry,
Moaning a requiem, in their utter desolation,
For old worlds passing by ?

Is it the wind that howls ? The Dead Tree thou
ignorest,
Speech hath, and Spirit, though a shadow grey.
Hearest thou not the voice that mourns the
vanished Forest,
That was, and passed away ?

“ White Man, behold me ! ghastly in the Spring’s
sereneness,
Battered, and bruised, by ceaseless storm and
strife ;
I am the Spectre of a mighty forest’s greenness,
I, who am Death in Life !

Late, and with lingering footsteps, Spring draws
near, revealing
Love, and new life, to every passer-by ;
Angel beloved ! in thy touches is no healing,
No balm for such as I !

Dawn after dawn, I, sleepless, wait the first
faint flushes,

Then, as the cloud-gates of the East unfold,

Over the world the red flood of the sunrise
rushes

That leaves me white and cold.

Heaven in her pity rains her tender tears upon
me,

Me,—who shall never bud nor bloom again,
There is no quickening in the sunshine lavished
on me,

The dew drops all in vain.

Shattered by lightning, tempest-tossed, and torn,
and broken,

Storms had no power to shake me till this
last,

When, at the coming of the White Man, doom
was spoken,—

Now live I in the Past !

What is there left, O White Man, what is there
remaining ?

What is there flees not from before thy
face ?

Wonder thou not to hear the Spirits' loud com-
plaining

For flower, forest, race !

As the worn body by a lingering breath is
haunted,

So is my Ghost withheld from final peace ;

While these strong roots thus firmly in the earth
are planted,

Am I denied release.

Hast thou no mercy, Storm-wind ? let thy fury
hound me ;

Let loose thy Fiends, and bid them work their
will,

Till in Earth's bosom snaps the link that bound
me !

Then shall my soul be still !"

Dost thou not hear, O White Man, through thy
troubled dreaming

On this calm night when all the world lies
stark,

Sharp through the silence, moaning of the sea,
and screaming

Of night-birds in the dark ?

What ! dost thou say, O White Man, shivering
when the shrieking

Wild voices thrill thee in an agony of pain :

“Peace ! ’tis the Ocean calling ! ’tis the Dead
Tree creaking !

Hush thee, my heart, again !”

They are not birds ! the sea wails not in lamenta-
tion—

They are the Ghosts of Earth, and Air, that
cry,

Moaning a requiem, in their utter desolation,
For old worlds passing by.

FREEDOM

YOU speak of Freedom ; believe me all the same,
There never yet was actual Liberty ;
There never yet was mortal man so free
That he could win, of his endeavour, Fame,
That Crown of Honour, or choose the Cross of
Shame.

Each treads the path towards Infinity
As best he may,—such power alone hath he,—
Himself he cannot make nor mar his name.

Man is not free to hasten, nor to wait,
Nor walks he unattended to his doom,
Behind him in the silence, and the gloom,
Those Powers stand, and watch remorselessly,
Who are his Masters :—one, Heredity,
One, Circumstance, whose other name is Fate.

AVE, CAESAR !

LONG live the King ! for lo ! the Queen is dead !

Bring her in state, that all the world may know

This was the Queen who now lies here so low,

Wrap her in samite, and soft flowers, and shed
Incense and odours round her quiet head ;

Bring her in state, and let the city show

A last long reverence, a splendid woe.

This was the Queen, whom Death hath van-
quishéd.

Ay thou, O Death, art Conqueror and King !

Thou claimest at the humblest cottage door

Thy homage due, and thou demandest more,

And hast no mercy on the arms that cling ;

And at thy word the haughty Emperor

Lays down his sceptre, and the Pope his ring.

DEATH, IN YOUTH

DEATH, thou art cruel! Take the weak, and
old,

The worn, and weary! Clasp them to thy
breast,

That they may find an everlasting rest,
And thee no ghoul, no spectre grim and cold.
But take not us! our Spring hath but unrolled
Her tender blossoms, and to us the zest
Of Youth, and Love, and Living still are best,
And we would see our Summer's green and gold.

Ah! who could wish to leave this pleasant earth,
And all she yields of sound, and sense, and
sight,

With books, and friends, and all the simple
mirth,

And beauty, and divinest melody,
To enter worlds unknown of mist, and night,
The home of doubt, and gloom, and mystery?

SERENADE FROM ITALY

I THINK of thee all day, my beloved,
I think of thee all day !
The brown sails swing as the fisher-folk sing
And the boats slide over the bay
With sunshine, and tinkle of mandolines,
But thou art so far away ;
And I think of thee all day, my beloved,
I think of thee all day !

I dream of thee all night, my beloved,
I dream of thee all night !
When on city walls the moonlight falls
So cold, and calm, and white ;
When sea, and sky, and the earth are still,
I am with thee, Heart's Delight,
For I dream of thee all night, my beloved,
I dream of thee all night !

My heart is all thine own, my belovëd,

My heart is all thine own !

Whether sunlight glows on the lips of the
rose

Or the Queen-moon's on her throne.

In the land of laughter, and light, and love,

I linger alone, alone,

For my heart is all thine own, my belovëd,

My heart is all thine own !

A SONG OF GOLD

OH, there's great exhilaration in the bosoms of
the boys

Who are sailing for the gold-fields in the West ;
There's a roaring time ahead though the dear old
days are dead,

And the bonny birds are flying from the nest ;
Let the old folk bide alone, for the whole wide
world's your own,

And there's yellow gold in plenty in the West !

For it's gold ! bright gold !

And it's yours to handle, to have, and to hold !

Will you sell your lives, as they have been sold,

For the bright, hard gold ?

Oh, there's grief and tribulation for the mothers
of the boys,

For the sisters and the sweethearts left behind ;

Ah, the good old times are dead ! ah, the weary
wait instead,

When the ship is scudding on before the wind ;
For it's well for those who go to the gay new life
you know,

But it's cruel hard for them that stay behind.

*But it's gold ! bright gold !
And it's yours to handle, to have, and to hold !
Will you sell your hearts, as they have been sold,
For the bright, hard gold ?*

Oh, there's mighty jubilation in the hearts of all
the boys

Who are drinking in the grog-shops of the
town ;

And the lamps flare overhead till the gay carouse
is sped,

And the jolly dogs have knocked their last sous
down ;

What with billiards, dice, and gin, you can make
the money spin,

When you chance to leave the diggings for the
town.

And it's gold ! bright gold !

It's yours to handle, to have, and to hold !

Will you sell your souls, as they have been sold,

For the bright, hard gold ?

Oh, there's strange inanimation on the faces of
the boys

Who went gaily to the gold-fields long ago :

Though the parched earth is their bed, very
peaceful are the dead,

Very quiet are the sleepers lying low.

They are scattered here and there, does it matter
why, or where,

When their mothers' hearts were broken long
ago ?

It was gold ! bright gold !

It was yours to handle, to have, and to hold !

Did you sell your lives, as they have been sold,

For the bright, hard gold ?

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

RED clover bloweth
 Subtle and sweet ;
The calm river floweth
 Close to my feet :
Ever and onward
 The dark currents sweep
Steadily downward,
 Silent and deep.

So my heart ever
 Turns to its mate ;
Say, can we sever,
 Is it not Fate ?
As the great river
 Sweeps to the sea,
So my thoughts ever
 Flow, Love, to thee !

THE SPLITTER'S SONG

THE long day's nearly over, and the quiet night's
at hand,

It's time for giving over work, I know ;

Peace is creeping down the valley, stillness settles
on the land,

The shadows they are lengthening here
below.

Far away, the sun is shining on the Southern
headland still,

On rugged rocks, and sheets of shining foam,—
Here the wekas 'gin to answer one another from
the hill,

And the wood-splitters are making tracks for
home.—

*For day is done, and night's begun,
And dreamless sleep is coming !*

As the last man stumbles wharéwards, the more-
porks harshly hoot,
And sleepy bell-birds flutter in the Bush ;
From out the tangled supplejack, convolvulus,
and tutu,¹
He hears the creek's unceasing roar and
rush.
Now stars begin to twinkle in the clear sky, one
by one,
All's silent save for plaintive cry of sheep
And the bleat of young lambs answering,—at
setting of the sun,
It seems that all our world must fall asleep.

*When day is done, and night's begun,
A dreamless sleep is coming !*

There streams a flood of firelight from the
wharé's open doors,
The cook's had supper ready long ago :
Fling the logs upon the hearth till the iron
chimney roars,
Black pine, manuka sticks, and matipo !

¹ Pronounced "toot."

Supper over, smoke begins;—with a yarn or
song maybe,

And the splitter tumbles early into bunk ;
Before the break of dawning, far across the hills
is he,

So soon in depths of slumber he is sunk,—

*When work is done, and night's begun,
His dreamless sleep is coming !*

O my brothers, O my sisters, by the bitter bond
of "graft,"

By sweat of brow, by salt of scalding tears,—
Who needs must travel for'ard, while the loafers
journey aft,

Who needs must toil and struggle all your
years ;

This know I : night comes down on the longest,
hardest day,

And deep and sweet is sleep when life is past ;
There is rest for every worker, and the landlord
asks no pay

For the bed that welcomes weary bones at last.

*When day is done, and night's begun,
A dreamless sleep is coming !*

IF LOVE WERE ALL!

IF Love were all, I should not hesitate ;
But I should lay at thy belov'd feet
My crown of life, secure to find my fate
Perfected, and mine own self made complete,—
If Love were all !

If Love were all, how simple it would be
To sit apart from storm, and strife, and stir,
In some old garden, rare with rosemary,
And redolent of dainty lavender,—
If Love were all !

But Life has many voices, Dear, and we
Hear Duty's ringing clarion, and pass
Out from our fairyland of fantasy,
Out from the old-world loveliness,—alas,
Love is not all !

SUSPIRIA

CLASPED in the clinging arms of Death she
lies,

All robed in white as best befits a bride,
In solemn state amongst her draperies,—
The mirror by her side.

The deadly crystals glitter in the glass,—
The last late roses glimmer on her bed,—
The sunbeams steal between the slats, and
pass
To greet her who is dead.

She will not sin, nor suffer, any more,
She heeds no comments from the curious
crowd,
She does not hear it buzzing at the door ;
Peace wraps her in its shroud.

And I? I have no sighs of vain regret
For dear lost love, for fair hopes vanishéd,
No passionate tears her poor pale fingers wet
Even now,—when she is dead.

Nay, deeper, deeper than the deepest Hell,
Stranger than life, sadder than friend forgot,
My grief,—who grieve not that I loved too well,
But that I loved her not.

AFTER THE HONEYMOON

WAKE from thy sleep, O Husband! I am
here

Who am the Soul of her thou callest Wife :
Look thou upon me, Husband! have no fear,
I am thy Chosen, bound to thee for life.

Thou hast the right to look on me unveiled
By that fair covering of warm white flesh ;
Gaze on me calmly, Husband! unassailed
By glance of eye, or gleam of silken mesh

Of hair, or bosom, or rose-red mouth, or cheek,—
See! I have laid my loveliness aside,
And here, my Self, I stand before thee, weak,
Ay, weak as water, I who am thy Bride!

Yet long ago,—when, I remember not,—

There was no whiter soul the whole world round,
And I was free as any ; but the lot
Fell unto me in artificial ground.

They weighed me down with iron bonds of rule,
They bade me bow to Custom's slightest nod,
Until I learned to love the gilded fool
And hailed Conventionality as God.

They set my feet upon a beaten way
And bade me wander not to right or left,
“Thus far, no farther, shall thy footsteps stray,”
Early was I of liberty bereft.

Time was when I rebelled against my fate
And would have thrown my fetishes aside ;
Cut mine own path, but for my irons' weight,
And, crushed at birth, my new-born longings
died.

And now I cannot move without these stays
And props ; since wish for Freedom's dead,
I care not now to walk untrodden ways,
Nor have I strength to walk unfetteréd.

Nature sets bounds, but Nature I defied,
And Nature hath revenged herself on me ;
For all her laws I learned to lay aside,
Poor slave to artificiality !

Dost thou still wonder I am weak and small,
Deform'd, diseas'd, beyond physician's skill ?
Wonder that I had strength to live at all,
Wonder that any life is in me still !

I am thy Wife : flesh of thy flesh,—that's well,
Since flesh is flesh, and I, if foul, am fair ;
Soul of thy soul ! Ah Husband, what if Hell
Were sweeter to thee than thy Life's despair ?

For thou shalt live, and I shall still endure,
A loathsome thing that hath no member whole,
Until the friction of a mind impure
Create a canker in thy healthy soul.

Wouldst thou soar upwards ? I shall drag thee
back

To mine own footing on Gehenna's slope,
Killing thy finer fancies as the black
And nipping frost cuts down the heliotrope.

Pity me,—loathe me,—still my place is here,
Beside thee, with thee, close to thee for life,
Look thou upon me, Husband! have no fear,
I am the Soul of her thou madest Wife!

FORSAKEN

(A Modern Woman speaks)

I CANNOT blame you, though a passing-bell
Toll in mine ears, and deaden other sound,
And stars seem dimmer as the years roll
round ;

I cannot blame you ;—you have chosen well.

I loved you, love you ; but I am not weak ;
You would not know it, looking in mine eyes ;
My heartache is not proved by tears or sighs,
Nor has the colour faded from my cheek.

When first I heard, I did not start, nor cry,—
I think I smiled !—we did not stand alone,
And though my heart seemed stiffened into
stone,
No keen-eyed watcher guessed my agony.

How should I blame you ? never definite word,
And never promise passed between us two ;
You never said you loved me,—true, so true !—
But what your own heart whisper'd, my heart
heard !

Did you not love me ? Ah, the passionate bliss
Of sudden meetings when we feared to speak,
For strongest feeling ever makes us weak,
Being too strong for spoken word or kiss.

Did you not love me ? Ah, the joys and sorrows
Of those past days ! the silent walks, the rides.
Down the long valleys, up the steep hill-sides ;
Ah friend ! the sadness now of these To-morrows !

I know you loved me in those days of old,
But Prudence bade you pause a little while,
And so you waited,—and your look, your smile,
Entranced me still, although your love grew cold.

And then you saw my soul was made to roam
Above convention on a wild-bird's wings ;
I could not give my heart to humdrum things,
The little sordid cares of house and home.

Did you not love me?—much against your will!
I was too bold, too modern, and too free;
Outspoken as a woman should not be,—
You disapproved,—and yet you loved me still!

One of the twain must conquer, one submit:
Which were the harder, which more full of
rack?—
For me to rein my fiery spirit back?
For you to spur your soul to roam with it?

I know it all! A lifelong fight for me
To stand without forbidden fields of thought;
Perhaps some peace at last,—too dearly bought
At cost of individuality!

Far better as it is, and yet,—the pain!—
Not even the Modern Woman can conquer Fate
It is so hard to work alone, and wait;
I love you, Dear, so dearly! all in vain—

But you who choose the well-worn path of life,
And wish no straying from the beaten track,
Not even you could call my wild soul back,
Or mould me to your will, the model wife.

I cannot blame you, for I love her too ;

Graceful she is, and gracious : pure, and sweet ;

A fitting mate ; from dainty hands and feet

To shining hair, tender, and kind, and true.

Go to her, and be happy ; fare you well !—

While I must walk alone, and wait, and pray

For you and yours ; but on your wedding-day

I hear no sound but of a passing-bell.

IN AN OLD GARDEN

THIS was a shrine that held one sweet Saint
only,

This was a haunt an Angel form did bless ;
Drear is the Garden, and the rosewalk lonely,
Now that she's gone with light and loveliness.

Thou, who wast very spirit of this pleasance,
Breathe on me with thy lilac's faint perfume ;
Come ! make the garden gladder with thy presence,
Come ! move a sunbeam thro' the orchard-
gloom !—

She will not come ! Night's shadow creeps, and
crosses

The splendour of the Springtide's opal skies ;
Heedless of me, and earthly loves, and losses,
She walks the Garden of her Paradise.

THE THREE FRIENDS

I WANDERED far with Youth,
And Life, and Love,
Three merry friends in truth !—
Blue sky above,
Buds breaking at our feet
Pleasant to see ;—
Life, Love, and Youth were sweet
Comrades to me.

Though peaceful were our days
By sun, by moon,
The parting of the ways
Came soon,—too soon !
“ Farewell ! ” said Youth in glee
Turning aside,
“ Love, wilt thou follow me,
Or Life, as guide ? ”

"Ah, stay! dear Love," said I;

"Hast thou forgot?

Even though Youth go by,

Love, leave me not!"

"I follow Youth," said she,

(Fickle, false Love!)

"Old friend, farewell to thee

Where'er thou rove."

Fain would I follow too,

Life held me back;—

"Comrade, I tell thee true,

Here lies our track."

So we two wander on,

This Life and I,

Sad 'tis now Youth has gone,

Love passed us by.

Often I say to Life:

"Go thou thy way,

Weary am I of strife,

Long night, dull day."

"Ah no!" says Life to me,

"The Sun shall shine

In some sweet day to be,

Comrade of mine!"

Life tells of flowers ahead,
Fields, quiet streams,—
I reach no violet bed
Save in my dreams.
“Vain are thy words, false friend,
Leave me, I pray,
Sweeter it were to wend
Lonely, my way.”

- “Ah no ! we will not part,”
Says Life to me ;
“Somewhere beyond, Dear Heart,
Death waits for thee.
There I shall leave thee for
He, in his ruth,
Leads thee to meet once more,
Lost Love, and Youth.”

BY THE SEA

A SULLEN sky, a dull dark sea,
An angry sea-gull screaming,—
No gleam of light to left or right,
And I alone and dreaming!

A sweep of sand, a ridge of rock,
A line of billows breaking
Against the shore with muffled roar
That sets my poor heart aching.

For so against a vessel's prow,
The self-same sea was beating,—
The self-same sea,—but then to me
A sweeter song repeating.

For then it sang that Love is long,
But now that Life is lonely ;
There's little music in the song
That falls on my ears only.

Ah me, ah me ! that summer sea,
Those days of sunny weather,
Those moonlit nights upon the deck,
And you and I together !

Whilst steaming down the rocky coast
We watched the red sun sinking,
And like a kindly eye almost
One star was twinkling, blinking !

The golden glory faded soon,
That night in sweet December,
And then there rose the mellow moon,
My friend, do you remember ?

We talked of books, we talked of men,
You with sarcastic jesting ;
Till, falling into graver strain,
Some thought your sneer arresting,

You dropped your cynic's mask outright,
Your words were true and tender ;
I think I saw your soul that night,—
That night of moonlight splendour !

The waters flow, the wild winds blow,
Those halcyon days are over ;
'Twas long ago,—I do not know
If you were friend, or lover.

The waters come, the waters go,
Whose constancy derides us ;
For here am I, and where are you ?
God knows what sea divides us !

And you who are so far away,
Forget that sweet December ;
For men forget with scant regret,—
It's women who remember !

Well, shipboard is the place we know
For holiday flirtation ;
You only did as others do
In such a situation.

But fun to you, was pain to me,
Changed is my whole existence ;
There haunts me yet a wild regret
With shadowy persistence.

I linger in the sullen South,
This dreary sky above me ;
Regret, and pain, and dreams are vain,
For, friend, you did not love me !

O angry sky ! O dull dark sea !
O seagull, wailing, screaming !—
There is no light to left or right,
I am alone, and dreaming !

TWO SONNETS

I

ALAS, that quiet graveyard on the hill !
Thither the mourners with their burdens go,
Their heads bow'd down, their footsteps sad
and slow ;
There lie my dead ;—and yet beside the rill,
Young children laugh their loudest as they will,
And happy lovers wander to and fro :
Life has no break in its continuous flow,
And on these mounds the sunshine streameth
still.

But what avails it that the glory lies
Upon the hill ? what pleasure can it give
Unto my dead ? or unto me who live
Bereav'd ? Alas, I find no solace there,
Nor have I any comfort anywhere,—
The race endures,—the individual dies !

II

THE lilies bud and blossom, droop and die ;
The apples redden, mellowing to decay ;
The noiseless years steal on, and glide away ;
And here the living leave their dead,—while I,
I know full well mine own time draweth nigh.
Yet welcome we the New Year as we may,
And Spring shows fairer flowers, day by day,
And fresh fruits ripen as the months roll by.

Ah, what avails it that we leave our love
With our lone dead upon the quiet hill ?
Time brings at last a medicine that cures
All heartache ; and the wide world's life is still
Eternal as the silent stars above,—
The individual dies,—the race endures !

FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE

WE sailed away that sweet Spring day,
And out across the harbour-bar ;
The sun shone bright, the foam gleamed white,
The snowy mountains glittered far.

A careless kiss, a gay good-bye,
We only part to meet again !
Upon the sand he waved his hand,
We waved to him in merry vein.

The cliffs gloomed grim, the pier grew dim,
And dim the line of bush-clad shore ;—
O idle laughter ! light farewell !
We part, who meet not any more.

We sailed again in vain, in vain !
Across the angry harbour-bar ;—
The sun shone bright, the foam gleamed white,
The snowy mountains glittered far.

No greeting word that day we heard,
Nor any welcoming we had ;
Across the pier a funeral bier
Was borne in silence slow and sad.

His bed is deep, and sound his sleep ;
The bush-birds sing him lullabies ;
Beneath his own dear forest trees
In God's own solitude he lies.

Farewell, farewell ! no passing-bell
Disturbs their rest who sleep like thee ;
Sleep, brother, sleep ! thy bed is deep,
Thy face is towards the open sea !

LIEBESWEH

AH, my heart, the storm and sadness !

Wind that moans, uncomforted,

Requiem for Love that's dead,

Love that's dead !

Leafless trees that sough and sigh,

Gloom of earth, and grey of sky,

Ah, my heart, what storm and sadness !

Ah, my heart, those sweet Septembers !

Ah, the glory and the glow

Of the Spring-tides long ago,

Long ago !

Gleam of gold, and glint of green

On the grassy hillsides seen,

Ah, my heart, those sweet Septembers !

Ah, my heart, on sweet soft pinions,
Spring, the lov'd one, hovers nigh,
She shall settle by-and-by,
By-and-by!

But the hills shall shine in vain,
Love, alas, comes not again,
Ah, my heart, on sweet soft pinions!

AFTER THE FLOOD

HERE, in this bend of the creek, in the rushes,
and long lush grasses,

Wild white violets nestle, and musk in the
water-weeds ;

Here there is stillness and shelter, for the
wandering wind as it passes

Is caught in the tall green flax, and dies in the
rushes and reeds.

Only the roar of the creek, half-hidden in flax
and toi,

Swirling in darksome pools under the Maori-
head,

Only the bleat of sheep, and a drover's distant
cooee,

Only the bark of dogs to break the sleep of the
dead !

Silence and stillness else, and westward across
the plain,
Over hedges, and homesteads, and paddocks
of wheat and rye,
Shoulder, and glacier, and peak, range upon
range again,
Blue rise the Alps in the distance kissing the
soft blue sky.

This is the place where we found him, here, with
his face to the skies,
Cast by the whirl of the creek, like a broken
straw, on the bank ;
Here, at the pitiless sun he stared with unseeing
eyes,
Neither despairing, nor pleading, but horribly,
hopelessly blank.

Snow ? we had plenty of snow, that winter of
seventy-one,
Snow on the lowlands, and snow on the high-
lands, and snow on the range ;
Never a month of Spring, for all with a rush and
run,
Winter turned into Summer ;—folks called it a
curséd change ;—

For a warm nor'wester raged the whole of a
windy week,
Melted the Alpine snow, and, after a day of
doubt,
We woke in the dead of night to the roar of the
angry creek,
Woke in the wild, wild night to know that the
floods were out.

We in the homestead watched after that weary
night,
Watched through the weary day, while the
water rose to the door ;
Watched, while the children shouted, and wel-
comed the flood with delight,
Sailed their paper boats, and paddled about on
the floor.

On rushed the yellow flood, crashing, and dash-
ing, and hurling
Timber, and logs, like straws in the foam of
the angry deep,
And, as the day wore on, we heard through the
roar of its swirling,
Piteous, the low of cattle, and the cry of
terrified sheep.

Then when the flood went down, paddocks and
roads were strewn

With timber and broken branches, half-buried
in oozy mud ;

· Carcases hither and thither, palings and posts
torn down,

Flax and toi uprooted, traced the course of
the flood.

This is the place where he lay with his wan
white face to the skies,

Caught here against a gorse-stump amongst
the reeds on the bank ;

Here, at the merciless sun he stared with un-
seeing eyes,

Neither despairing, nor pleading, but horribly,
hopelessly blank.

And here we stood in silence ;—the shepherd
Jim and I,—

Stood, and stared at the stillness in the staring
face of the dead ;

And Jim knelt down in the rushes, and closed
the expressionless eye,

And covered the corpse with his coat ; “ For
the sake of the Mother,” he said.

He had but a pipe in his pocket, and matches
sodden and damp,
Never a mark, nor word, to trace his home or
his name;
“Only a swagger,” they said; and nobody
misses a tramp,
Houseless, and nameless,—who cared whither
he went, or came?

We buried him here where we found him, a
glorious summer day,
With the wild wind rustling the flax-blades,
and the scent of gorse in the air;—
Here, with the thyme and violets, we laid the
stranger away,
And left him there in the stillness with never
a plaint nor prayer.

Gentleman, swagger, clown — what difference,
dying thus?

In the face of the pitiless Present, what were
the things of the Past?

Gentle, or simple, what matter? it was nothing
to him or to us,

We are all of us gentle enough, and simple
too, at the last!

Yet the shepherd Jim, and I, had looked on the
face of the dead,—

Looked on a dogged jaw, and forehead solid
and square;—

There was will in that iron jaw, and force in that
massive head;—

Drowned, like a rat in the creek, with that
power and intellect there!

And somewhere out in the distance was there a
mother, or wife,

Waiting, and watching, and praying as only
women can pray?

Waiting, and watching, and praying in vain for a
wasted life,

And a nameless tramp who perished,—how
many miles away?

Aye, you may wait, ye women, and pray, and
weep again,

Weep for the wasted talent, weep for the
wasted life!

The whole wide world weeps with you, the whole
world's tears are vain,

Even as yours, O Mother, even as yours, O
Wife!

O Life! thou art riddle of riddles! for lo, as the
years roll by,

We also have vexed our spirits since the
human epoch began,

Who live, eat, drink, and are merry, who suffer,
and sin, and die,

Content to be amongst many;—then how for
the hundredth man?

Might he have risen to lead us, the many, the
common crowd,

To leave his mark upon us by right of a
powerfuller brain?

Was he with higher feeling, and keener thought
endowed,

This tramp, this nameless swagger, whose life
was void and vain?

Ah well, let him sleep in peace, while the water-
weeds and mosses

Nestle under the raupo in the quiet bend of the
creek;

Life is a difficult thing with its longings, its
loves, and its losses,

May Death be an easier matter to all of us
strong or weak!

WHEN LILAC BLOOMS

WHEN Lilac blooms, what gambolling
In Hawthorn boughs ! what whirr of wing !
And in sweet-peas and mignonette,
On window-ledges quaintly set,
What hum of bees ! what murmuring !

And as the lindens sway and swing,
This slow blood moves with everything ;
The pulses throb with fume and fret
When Lilac blooms !

For old Love stirs, and fain would sing,
And revel with the lusty Spring,—
Old Love who lingers with me yet
In this, my Garden of Regret,—
Ah Love ! too late thy wakening
When Lilac blooms !

AT EVENING

To break the stillness of the hour

There is no sound, no voice, no stir ;

Only the croak of frogs,—the whirr
Of crickets hidden in leaf and flower.

The clear-cut outlines of a spire

Spring from a mass of eucalypt

Sharply against the sky,—still tipped
With one last gleam of lingering fire.

So solemnly the shadows creep ;

On dovelike wings Night flutters down ;

Lights twinkle in the little town ;

The valley lies in quiet sleep.

So comes the dark, so fades the light,

On all those leagues of tossing sea

That lie between my home and me,

And glimmer to the stars all night.

And so, beloved, silently
In thine own land the shadows fall
On grassy lawn, and garden-wall,
On shining sand, and troubled sea,—

On paths thy feet shall never tread,—
On fields thine eyes shall never see,—
And on thy new home, strange to me,
That silent City of the Dead !

Yea, stillness rests, O Tried and True,
On hand and heart, on lips and eyes !
On thee eternal silence lies,
On thee is utter darkness too.

We lost too much in losing thee,
Yet we who knew and loved thee best,
Wish thee an everlasting rest,
Night came on thee so quietly.

Peace with the Shadows ! Peace to all
Who work and weep, who pray and wait ;
Till we and thou are one with Fate,
And on us too, the Night shall fall !

DUTY AND LOVE

SHE dwelt apart upon the warm hillside,
And her soul's home amongst the flowers
was set ;
There in the sunshine, lilies golden-eyed
Bloom'd, and the air was sweet with mig-
nonette.

Away to westward, far across the plain,
She saw the glitter of eternal snow
Upon the mountains ; and to East again
Beheld the splendour of the sea below.

Beneath her, when the wreaths of fog uncurled,
She saw a valley where lived other men
For ever toiling in a sunless world
Of squalid village, weedy waste, and fen.

And often, as she watched them from the height,
She sighed to think of lives so lost and low :
“ Poor souls ! how limited the range of sight
Of them who pace that valley to and fro ! ”

And in the glow of golden afterlight,
One wandered through her garden whom she
knew,
And at his step her world seemed yet more
bright,
Her roses glistened as with fresh-fall'n dew.

Then down she stepped from her soul's citadel,
And bowed herself, and bending, kissed his
feet,
Saying : “ Ah Love ! now thou art come, all's
well ;
How have I lived until thy coming, Sweet ? ”

There knocked a stranger at her shrine of
shrines,
Heard, but unheeded there for many a day ;
To whom she, opening—instinct quick divines !—
“ Art thou not Duty ? answer me, and say ! ”

And Duty looked at her with grim, grey face,
And as he looked her flowers drooped and
died :

“Go down ! within the shadow is thy place,
Go down !” he said : “I may not be denied.”

“Ah Duty ! must I part from happiness,
And from my Love ?—him must I lose in-
deed ?”—

“Leave thou thy Garden to the wilderness,
And thy dear Love, and follow as I lead !”

“And must I leave my flowers all behind ?
Lo, I will take this sprig of rosemary,
That, growing in the valley, it may mind
Me of my mountains, and my mighty sea.”

So saying she within her bosom set
A golden jar that in the sunlight flashed ;
Wherein grew rosemary and mignonette ;
Then turned she, and the gate behind them
clashed.

But Duty looked at her with cold, calm eyes,
And heavy grew the burden in her breast ;
“ Throw down,” said he, “ thy golden memories,
Look not behind thee : think not thou to rest.

“ For I am He who may not be denied,
And thou must enter now the shadow-world.”
Then did she throw her rosemary aside,
And round the twain sudden the fog-wreaths
curled.

There were not any gardens in the vale ;
No plant grew well in soil so sour and wet,
But sedge, and dock, and darnel ; and one pale
Immortal on a window-ledge was set.

And up and down the valley-dwellers went,
Hither and thither on the daily round ;
Each on his own small scheme of life intent,—
One, to the workshop,—one, to till the ground.

Then said she : “ Lo, I will a Garden make,
Though only wan Immortals grow therein ;
This will I, Duty, for my lost Love’s sake,
Perchance I some from these dull tasks may
win.”

But Duty looked at her with stern white brow,
And she (sweet soul!) read judgment in his
glance;

“Go to the fields!” he said: “What folly now?
Thou needs must toil for thine own sustenance.

“Thou shalt not see thy sun, nor feel thy wind,
Nor hear the music of thy mountain-streams;
Thy Gardens are for ever left behind,
And empty is thine echoing House of Dreams!”

So to the fields she went for daily food,
As Duty bade her; till it chanced one morn
A woman gleaned beside her, old and rude,
Whose palsied fingers scarce could hold the corn.

“Thou, of thy mercy, let some little be,”
(She thus in feeble accents uttered moan,)
“Or wilt thou let me garner close to thee,
Until the hour when I must die alone?”

The answer came in pity; “Mother, nay,
Thou art not lone; I will not leave thee more,
We two will work together all our day,
And thou and I will share our little store.”

So side by side they gleaned the scanty grain,
And housed together through the hours of
night,
For many a day, till Duty came again,
And she beheld him, silent in the light ;

And cried : "Thou art not Duty ! thou art mild,
And surely there is sunshine on thy brow ;
How like thou art to Love !"—"What wonder,
child ?

Look in mine eyes, and thou wilt know me
now !"

TWO SIDES OF A QUESTION

IN AUSTRALIA

I

OH, there's Spring in the dazzling sunshine, and
glory in the day,

And I, in this noisy city, am throwing my life
away ;

Nothing but walls around me, and pavement
under my feet,

And it's O for the old bush-life again, and the
mountain breeze so sweet !

O for a glorious gallop on Coriander's back
Once again, as in other days, along the Uralla
track :—

My gallant horse for company, the bush with its
myriad tongues,

The Sun, the space, the splendour, and the free
fresh air in my lungs !

Somewhere out to the Northward, there is the
place for me,—
Miles upon miles of white-gum, and, as far as
your eye can see,
Rolling ranges on ranges, and monarch of them
all,
Indigo in the distance, the summit of Mount Duval.

And the yellow wattle's in blossom, and the bush
sarsaparilla
Twists and clings, and wreathes and swings
from gum-tree pillar to pillar;
Soldier-birds chatter and squabble up in a bottle-
brush tree,
And a solemn old Laughing-Jackass looks down
and cackles at me.

Ant-hills, red and yellow, gleam thro' the ragged
stems,
And everlasting daisies show their golden dia-
dems,
There's maidenhair in the cracks of the rocks
where the sly snake basks in the sun,
And magpies whistle their sweetest for joy of the
day begun.

Push, and crowd, and jostle! jostle, and crowd,
and push!

O to be out of the turmoil away in the quiet Bush!
Away from the roar and rattle, away from the
dirt and din,

The beggar's whine, and the pious fraud, sorrow,
disease, and sin.

O voice of the Bush that is calling, and calling
again, again!

O many-toned voice of the Bush! must you call
to me always in vain?

Shall I never be able to follow to the land that is
far and fair?

O who could bide in the city, who was born and
bred out there?

II

There's storm coming up the valley, there's rain
on the distant ranges,

And ever the wind in the gum-trees runs its
gamut of mournful changes,

All in a minor key; and there's gloom on earth,
and in sky,

And of all things dismal, I think there is nothing
more dismal than I!

Gum-trees, nothing but gum-trees! miles upon
miles of *them*,
With here and there a solitary "box," or a
bottle-brush with its stem
Stunted out of proportion: Look! how the loose
bark flaps!
Is it the dead in their winding-sheets? is it
ghosts of the past perhaps?

Letters? I've had no letters for a weary week,
or more;
A month-old paper's a joy to me, I read it o'er and
o'er.
What do I know of politics, of empires fall'n or
risen,
Of strikes, or wars, or life, or laws, shut in my
gum-tree prison?

Ignorant? I should think so! lost touch with
wiser men;—
Live in the Bush, like me, a bit:—you'd lose your
culture then!
It's oh to pace the pavement, rub shoulders with
the crowd,
Clasp hands again with fellow-men, hear greetings
long and loud!

Sometimes indeed I dream a dream of the things
I used to prize :—
The sound of a cultured voice again, the flash
of a woman's eyes,
The majestic roll of an organ, the wail of a
violin,—
There's something else in the city besides its
sorrow and sin !

O this is a fair stagnation ! I'm sick of the
beastly Bush ;
I've had too much of the weird white-gum, and
the gloomy bottle-brush ;
I somehow yearn for a kindred soul in place of a
kangaroo,
And I reckon they'll see me back in town in the
course of a month or two.

LULLABY¹

REST thee, my baby, rest,
Safe on thy mother's breast ;
Hush thee, sweet baby mine,
All the great world is thine !

Thou hast thy father's arm
To shield thy life from harm ;
Friends thou hast, kind and true ;
Thou hast thy mother too !

Hush thee, my little dove !
Thine is the sky above,
Thine, the green earth below,
Thine, all the flowers that blow.

Thou hast the free fresh air,
God's sunshine everywhere ;
Dew for thy flowers, and rain
To cool the earth again.

¹ Written for a School Magazine.

For thee the lilies blow,
And morning-glories grow,
Weaving a bower so fine,
All for this babe of mine !

While we, who love thee, sleep,
Hither God's angels creep
To guard from midnight fear
My little angel here !

So rest thee, baby, rest,
Safe on thy mother's breast ;
Hush thee, sweet baby mine,
All the great world is thine !

IN LONDON

WHEN I look out on London's teeming streets,
On grim grey houses, and on leaden skies,
My courage fails me, and my heart grows sick,
And I remember that fair heritage
Barter'd by me for what your London gives.
This is not Nature's city : I am kin
To whatsoever is of free and wild,
And here I pine between these narrow walls,
And London's smoke hides all the stars from me,
Light from mine eyes, and Heaven from my
heart.

For in an island of those Southern seas
That lie behind me, guarded by the Cross
That looks all night from out our splendid skies,
I know a valley opening to the East.

There, hour by hour, the lazy tide creeps in
Upon the sands I shall not pace again—
Save in a dream,—and, hour by hour, the tide
Creeps lazily out, and I behold it not,
Nor the young moon slow sinking to her rest
Behind the hills ; nor yet the dead white trees
Glimmering in the starlight : they are ghosts
Of what has been, and shall be never more.
No, never more !

Nor shall I hear again
The wind that rises at the dead of night
Suddenly, and sweeps inward from the sea,
Rustling the tussock, nor the wekas' wail
Echoing at evening from the tawny hills.

In that deserted garden that I lov'd
Day after day, my flowers drop unseen ;
And as your Summer slips away in tears,
Spring wakes our lovely Lady of the Bush,
The Kowhai, and she hastes to wrap herself
All in a mantle wrought of living gold ;
Then come the birds, who are her worshippers,
To hover round her ; tuis swift of wing,
And bell-birds flashing sudden in the sun,
Carolling : Ah ! what English nightingale,

Heard in the stillness of a summer eve,
From out the shadow of historic elms,
Sings sweeter than our Bell-bird of the Bush ?
And Spring is here : now the Veronica,
Our Koromiko, whitens on the cliff,
The honey-sweet Manuka buds, and bursts
In bloom, and the divine Convolvulus,
Most fair and frail of all our forest flowers,
Stars every covert, running riotous.
O quiet valley, opening to the East,
How far from this thy peacefulness am I !
Ah me, how far ! and far this stream of Life
From thy clear creek fast falling to the sea !

Yet let me not lament that these things are
In that lov'd country I shall see no more ;
All that has been is mine inviolate,
Lock'd in the secret book of memory.
And though I change, my valley knows no change.
And when I look on London's teeming streets,
On grim grey houses, and on leaden skies,
When speech seems but the babble of a crowd,
And music fails me, and my lamp of life
Burns low, and Art, my mistress, turns from
me,—

Then do I pass beyond the Gate of Dreams
Into my kingdom, walking unconstrained
By ways familiar under Southern skies ;
Nor unaccompanied ; the dear dumb things
I lov'd once, have their immortality.
There too is all fulfilment of desire :
In this the valley of my Paradise
I find again lost ideals, dreams too fair
For lasting ; there I meet once more mine own
Whom Death has stolen, or Life estranged from
me,—
And thither, with the coming of the dark,
Thou comest, and the night is full of stars.

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